

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 430 928

SP 038 510

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TITLE Preparing To Become a Reflective Practitioner: A Swedish Perspective.
PUB DATE 1999-04-20
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 19-23, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Journal Writing; Preservice Teacher Education; *Preservice Teachers; *Reflective Teaching; *Student Teacher Attitudes; Student Teaching
IDENTIFIERS *Reflective Thinking; *Sweden

ABSTRACT

This paper describes how preservice teachers at Sweden's Linköping University are prepared to become reflective practitioners. Students participate in a pedagogical seminar group that meets monthly. Within the group, they discuss matters important to all teachers and examine reflective texts that they had to write at the beginning of their teacher education program. These texts offer a presentation of themselves and a summary of how they regard teachers' work. Students also formulate their expectations prior to beginning each of several student teaching experiences. These introductory thoughts constitute a background for the personal journal the students keep during their teaching practice. After each student teaching session, mentor teachers and student teachers analyze the students' comments, then the students write reflective papers to be critiqued by the group. During the last year of their education, students write a thesis that integrates theory and practice. This model for creating reflective teachers is new at Linköping University, so only one group has completed the entire course so far. Surveys of the students after they had worked for 1 year as teachers indicated that the course had various effects. It facilitated their introduction to work when they applied for jobs and completed interviews; strengthened their identity as teachers when they met colleagues and parents; and worked as a basis for dealing with students. (SM)

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Preparing to become a Reflective Practitioner - a Swedish Perspective

Teacher education for the Swedish Compulsory School has two branches, one for teachers of younger children, 7-13 year-olds, and one for teachers of older children, 10-16 year-olds. The length of the teacher education is 3 ½ and 4 ½ years respectively. The teacher education program is concurrent and consists of subject studies, teaching practice and studies in education and methodology.

Teaching practice is divided into one short and three long periods. In the Statement of Aims for the practical part of the education, below, the expected progression of a student's reflective ability is charted.

The document's division into columns represents the four different practical periods, which are included in the teacher education. In the very first course, labelled *Teacher, Knowledge and Communication*, there is one week's practice for students to have an opportunity to think about their choice of profession. In the course, *The Teacher and the Development of Knowledge*, towards the end of the first year, there is a six-week practical period. Halfway through the education, there is a four-week practical period in the course, *The Teacher and the Training of Skills* and at the end of the education, a nine-week practical period is part of the course, *Teaching in the Compulsory School*.

A reflective way of working that leads to a personal plan of action

During the teacher education each student belongs to a pedagogical seminar group, which meets once a month. Within the seminar group, student teachers discuss matters important for all teachers and the different reflection texts they write, as prescribed below.

At the beginning of the teacher education, the student teachers prepare a written presentation of themselves and, after the first practical experience, a summary of how they regard a teacher's work. Both these pieces of writing are handed to the leader of the pedagogical seminar.

Before the student teachers start the teaching practice period of every course mentioned in the Statement of Aims, students formulate their expectations and hand them to their mentor teachers. These introductory thoughts constitute a background for the personal journal the students keep during their teaching practice. After each period of teaching practice the mentor teacher and the student teacher analyze their respective comments and summarize them. The personal journal and the summary create the basis for the reflection paper the student teacher gives the leader of the seminar group after each period of teaching practice.

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In one of the education theory courses, all student teachers formulate a document on their individual roles as teachers, basing it on research on teachers' thinking and action, the school's curriculum and their own experiences.

After the final period of teaching practice the personal plan of action is handed to the leader of the pedagogical seminar group. This leader possesses each student teacher's reflections after each period of practical work, follows each student teacher's development, and grades each personal plan of action.

During the last year of their education students also write a thesis in which theory and practice are integrated. The aim of this work is to create reflective teachers who are prepared to continuously develop their work in school.

Method and findings

This model for creating a reflective teacher is so new to us in Linköping that only one group of student teachers has completed the entire course and has had the opportunity to work as teachers for a year. In a questionnaire we asked these newly educated teachers how they had used their personal plan of action during their first year of work.

We gave them four questions: In what ways have you used your personal plan of action

- a) when you apply for a job
- b) when you co-operate with other teachers
- c) when you meet with parents
- d) when you plan the work for your pupils?

We choose to quote some of the answers.

I used my personal plan of action as a part of my application for a job. During the employment interview we discussed it and I felt very confident and could justify my ideas.

I read it before I was interviewed to strengthen myself.

I have it "inside me" and express myself with reference to it.

I gave my personal plan of action to my principal. She has, with my permission, used part of it to inform the teachers in our school. She has also asked me to tell my colleagues about it during a meeting and I intend to do that.

The personal plan of action is the most important document I have written during my formal education. I have expressed my thoughts and my convictions and this has strengthened me in my role as a teacher.

The personal plan of action has strengthened my identity as a teacher.

Writing the personal plan of action was part of an important process which proceeded during the entire education and is still going on. During the process I was forced to clearly express

my view of pupils, knowledge and learning. This base for my role as a teacher permeates everything in pedagogical discussions with colleagues, in meetings with parents and in the work with the pupils. To write down my personal view as a teacher was incredibly valuable and important.

The plan of action has given me confidence in my meetings with colleagues, parents and pupils. I know what I want to do and I can state my reasons for my work.

During my first meeting with parents I used my personal plan of action to briefly describe my pedagogical basic view and my intentions for working with the pupils.

I have expressed my basic view and therefore I know how I want to work.

In my personal plan of action I have written down my ideas about how to co-operate with parents and now I try to carry out my ideas.

I plan my work with the ideas from my personal plan of action as a starting point.

The personal plan of action is for me the most valuable aspect of the entire teacher education. It is concrete and I am proud of it. Furthermore, each year I will write a new plan of action and read my old ones.

How we assess the effects and potential effects of reflective training

We can see from the different answers that the personal plan of action has meant different things for the newly educated teachers. It has facilitated their introduction to work when they applied for a job and were interviewed. It has strengthened their identity as teachers when they have met colleagues and parents. It has also worked as a basis for working with their pupils. Young teachers recognize that they have learned to work with experience and theory in continuing development and in a reflective way.

However, among the answers we even got one which said: *I can't remember I have written a personal plan of action and I can't find it among my papers.*

You can lead a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink.

STATEMENT OF AIMS

	Learning about the school and the curriculum	The Teacher and the Learner	The Teacher and the School	Reflective ability
Reflective ability	Acquaint oneself with the school's organisation and the duties of the various education officials. Gain knowledge of the teacher's various roles and duties. Show interest and commitment for the role of the teacher.	Discuss the role of a teacher and assess one's own work. Be open to alternative suggestions. Question one's own opinions and show willingness to develop.	Be ready to develop and question critically didactic choices and personal opinions. Think through a strategy for what one wants to do.	Assess and reflect on how one's own prejudices affect teaching content and method. Basic work on various theories. Express oneself in a pedagogical plan of action. Observe the teacher's and school's duties from various perspectives.
Social competence	Show willingness to make contact with pupils.	Show a genuine interest in children and young people. Prove clear leadership ability and empathy. Respect pupils' input.	Establish contact with pupils, satisfy their reactions and needs. Establish a balance between a close relationship and clear leadership.	Create a good atmosphere in the class. Take notice of the need to change. Encourage pupil co-operation.
Teaching ability		Together with mentor teacher select content and method taking into account pupils' comprehension, aims and the material's relevance. Create learning situations, arouse pupils' interest, and be able to explain.	Integrate subject matter and teaching ability with pupils' abilities, needs and interests. Take an interest in the needs of individual pupils.	Take responsibility for large teaching unit. Consider pupils' abilities and interests. Assess the whole teaching unit.
Ability to cooperate			Co-operate with staff and parents.	Co-operation between subjects. Teamwork. Parent contact and co-operation.